

# MELBOURNE'S BUILDING STYLES

CREATE

BY SECRET AGENT



# WELCOME TO INNER MELBOURNE

## MELBOURNE’S BUILDING STYLES

Melbourne’s diverse built environment is a reflection of our relatively brief and fast paced history. The city has grown from the banks of the Yarra since 1835 when John Batman and John Fawkner crossed Bass Strait to explore the shores of Port Phillip. The small village they founded was surveyed and sold at public auction shortly after. Hoddell’s grid that shaped the character of Melbourne’s CBD was born. This analysis of Melbourne’s building styles provides a short overview of how the style and construction methods have changed over the years. Each building style brings with it distinct features that can present both opportunities and challenges when improving a property.

Every property is different, however we have identified some common traits. We have highlighted a Victorian Terrace, a Brick Veneer and a Warehouse example as case studies into how improvements can help convert them to today’s lifestyle.

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# EARLY & MID VICTORIAN

## THE HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

After Melbourne’s land sales in 1837, the temporary public accommodation of canvas tents and wooden shacks began to give way to a more permanent Melbourne – one built of masonry.

The private ownership of land reflected a new-found confidence in the colony. Buildings that were constructed in the Early Victorian era were simple and often rectangular forms built in rendered masonry or roughcut bluestone. Small two-roomed cottages with hipped roofs made of slate and corrugated iron were constructed for the poor. At the time, both materials had to be imported from England.

Outside, these early Victorian houses were epitomized by their simple picket fences and basic planting. External colours tended to be cream with Brunswick green or deep red highlights for the simple window frames.

Walls of the houses were generally masonry and were hard plastered, whitewashed, and wallpapered. Even the hessian interiors of timber cottages were wallpapered.

The 1849 establishment of the Melbourne Building Act quickly improved the standard of construction in the growing city. Many of the remaining timber cottages were proclaimed a fire risk by the authorities and subsequently pulled down.

The discovery of gold in 1851 brought rapid progress to the state. Melbourne’s population grew to 125 000 people by 1861 with the help of wealth from the goldfields.

This led to the creation of some of Melbourne’s earliest suburbs: Fitzroy, Collingwood, Richmond, and St Kilda. These were soon followed by newer suburbs: North Melbourne (Hotham), South Melbourne (Emerald Hill), Essendon, and Hawthorn.



FITZROY - A PRIME EXAMPLE OF THE EARLY VICTORIAN STYLE

## WHERE ARE THEY?





# LATE VICTORIAN

## ORNATE, AND ALL LINED UP IN A ROW.

Terrace houses and attached cottages started to become the dominant housing types of the Late Victorian era. For the first time in the new colony buildings were becoming adorned. Cast Iron lacework and fine detailing to the masonry parapets are characteristic of the era. Italianate styling with it’s rhythms and repetition of decoration, began to rise in popularity. It was ‘Marvellous Melbourne’ at its finest as the population jumped to half a million by 1880.

The filigree and decoration of the exteriors were reflected on the inside as well. With interiors becoming more ornate and decorated as the spoils of Melbourne’s growth were spent on design and decoration. The stock market crash and depression of the 1890’s put a quick end to this and severely impacted the city’s building and construction industry.

Fantastic examples of these ornate Victorian terraces can be found in South Yarra and Parkville.

Many of the Late Victorian examples are ready to move into, however older renovations will need an update.

Often attached, with narrow widths and deep blocks, sunlight access can be a challenge. Wet areas are often located at the rear of the property, and absent on the upper level.

A modification to bring a rear bathroom closer to the centre adds to the livability and would have a positive impact on resale value. In a study carried out by Secret Agent Research in 2013, it was found that terrace houses with a central bathroom sold at a \$39,700 premium on average in Inner Melbourne.



LATE VICTORIAN WITH LARGER THAN AVERAGE BONES

## WHERE ARE THEY?



## TYPICAL BLOCK SIZE AND POSITION

These properties are almost always attached (or semi-detached) and 4 to 6 metre frontages are the norm. The larger properties in East Melbourne and Carlton can be around 7 or 8m.

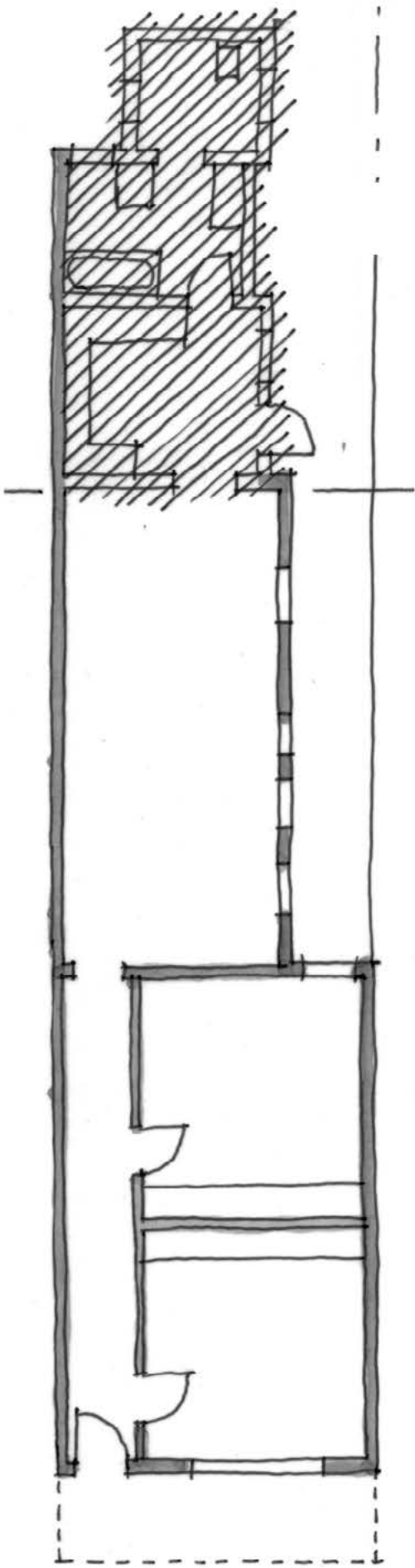
# CASE STUDY ONE: EARLY TERRACE

## EXISTING STRUCTURE

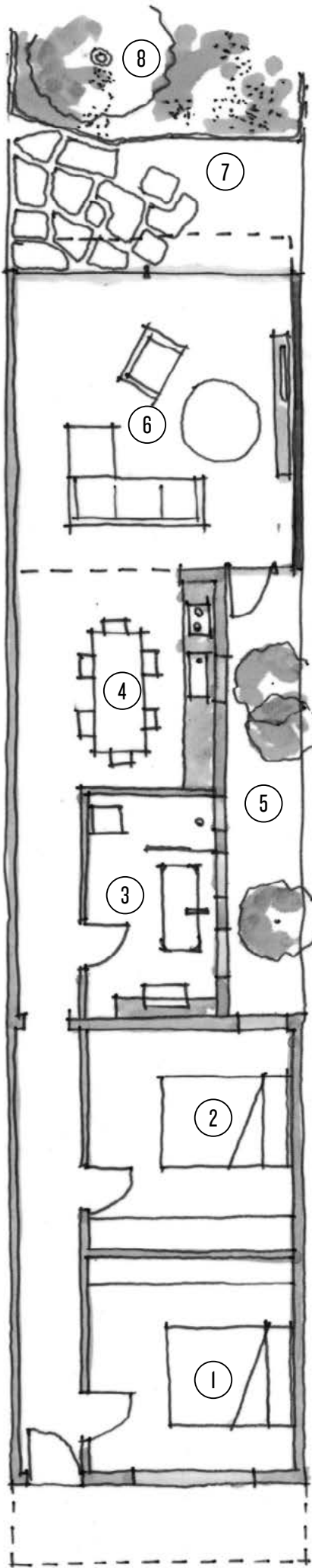
This renovation plan was created from an existing terrace plan in Amess St, Carlton North. It's deep but narrow (5.3 metre frontage) block presents challenges when looking to renovate and open up the living area towards the rear. As is typical to most terraces the original house had an external toilet but, over the years the built fabric has slowly crept up to it. The bathroom and laundry now have the aspect to the rear yard - not the ideal living arrangement!

The site itself is East-West facing, with the light court oriented to the North. This is ideal to let natural light into the kitchen, bathrooms and bedrooms.

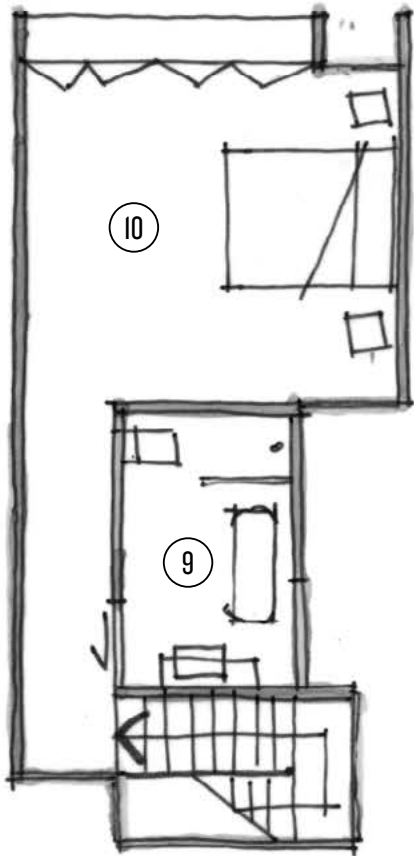
To our eyes, it's wise to retain as much of the existing built fabric as possible. Demolition and relocation of the existing wet areas would enable the addition of a full width living room at the rear. This would then free the narrow centre of the house for a large galley kitchen with a bathroom beyond. With the exception of the living area, all would be accommodated within the existing built fabric. For those that need more than two bathrooms, a master bedroom suite could follow the same footprint of the new build below. This change would reduce the size of the ground floor bathroom to fit the staircase near the proposed kitchen.



EXISTING CONDITIONS



PROPOSED RENOVATION



### LEGEND

- ① BEDROOM
- ② BEDROOM
- ③ BATHROOM
- ④ DINING / KITCHEN
- ⑤ LIGHT COURT
- ⑥ LIVING
- ⑦ PAVED COURTYARD
- ⑧ LANDSCAPING

### UPSTAIRS (OPTIONAL)

- ⑨ ENSUITE
- ⑩ MASTER BEDROOM



# FEDERATION

## SIMPLE AND NO-NONSENSE

The new century ushered in Federation of the states and a heroic outlook for Australia. This rising confidence was once again reflected in Melbourne with larger houses being built on larger allotments. The city was spreading past its inner-urban heartland with bigger blocks being sold in the next ring of suburbs: North Carlton, Brunswick, and Ascot Vale.

The Federation properties are typically freestanding and have larger ‘bones’ than the earlier Victorian properties. In Brunswick and surrounding suburbs the subdivision pattern is typically 36’x100’ or 11x30M. These 300m<sup>2</sup> blocks provide enough space for a larger family home with backyard.

Some have rear access of often narrow laneways - offstreet parking is quite hard to find with a Federation home.

The freestanding houses are weatherboard with a tin roof. The full width ‘bullnose’ style front verandah is a hallmark of the style.

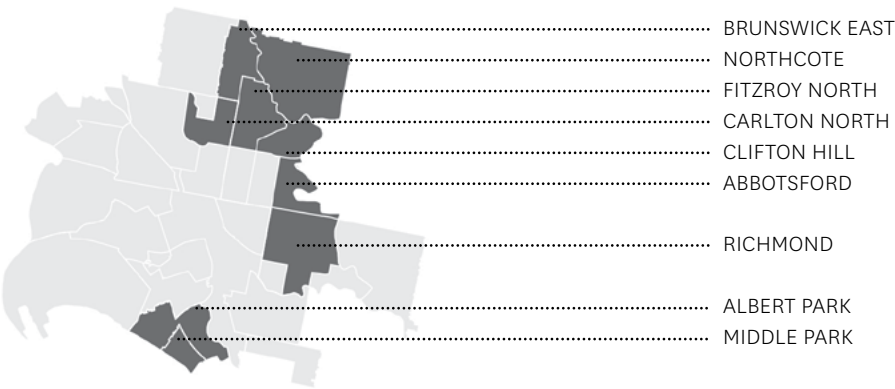
The straightforward beauty of the federation houses often make good candidates for renovation and extension. They benefit from a simple plan and easy to work with timber construction. An addition toward the rear is often the best way to extend, so backyard orientation is very important when looking for a site.

Often the existing houses have a central corridor flanked by two rooms either side. In conjunction with a contemporary extension out the rear (to house the living, dining and wet areas) a federation can provide ample family accommodation.



THE SIMPLE CHARM OF A GOOD FEDERATION PROPERTY

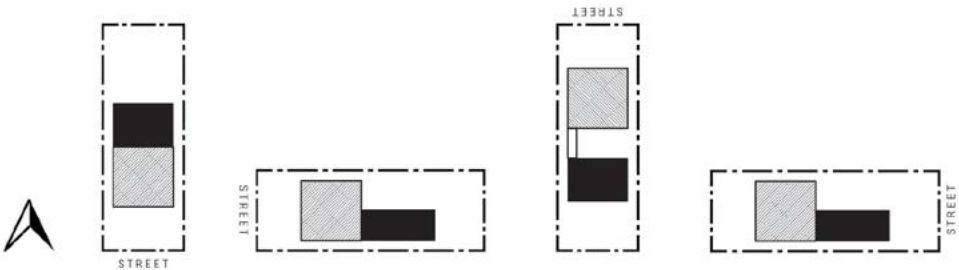
## WHERE ARE THEY?



## TYPICAL BLOCK SIZE AND POSITION

These properties are typically detached and 8 to 12 metre frontages are the norm. Setback vary with Federation houses depending on the area.

The best renovations take advantage of the natural positioning of the block, as shown by the black areas in the floorplans opposite. A large northern aspect is important.





# EDWARDIAN

## STYLE WITH SUBSTANCE

The new century ushered in Federation of the states and a heroic outlook for Australia. This rising confidence was once again reflected in Melbourne with larger houses being built on larger allotments. The city was spreading past its inner-urban heartland with bigger blocks being sold in the next ring of suburbs: North Carlton, Brunswick, and Ascot Vale.

Double brick was the dominant construction technique for Edwardian housing. Red bricks were used with flush struck joints finished in white mortar. The massing of Edwardian houses is dominated by the bold roof lines often quite ‘cut-up’ nature. Hipped roofs in Edwardian houses were punctured by bold gable ends. The gables were made a feature with timber fretwork and stucco finish in between. Dormer windows sometimes popped out of the large roof planes. The roofing was often finished in tiles, slate, or painted galvanized sheet.

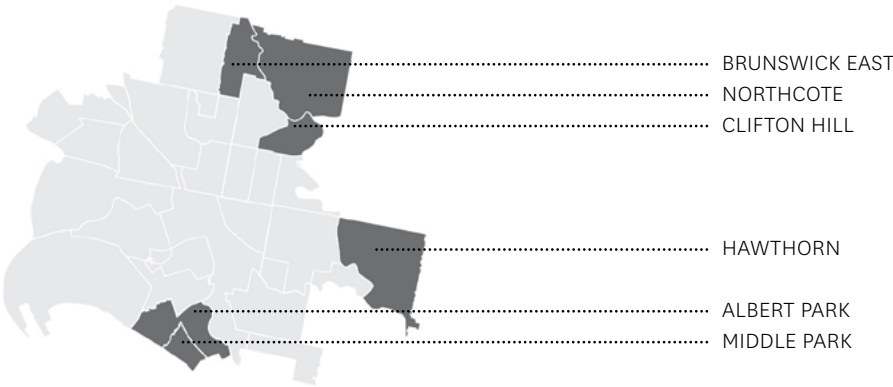
Internally, Edwardian houses generally have high ceilings often near 3.6m (new residential construction is typically 2.7m). Timber panelling and built-in furniture were characteristic of the grander Edwardian residences. The typical plan for an Edwardian house is four to six large rooms each opening off a central corridor.

Larger L-shaped verandahs wrapping around the entry appeared in response to the harsh Australian summer. Cast iron fenestration fell out of favour for more simple and substantial timber fretwork.



PARED BACK FENSTRATION OF A EDWARDIAN HOUSE, FITTING IN WITH THE VERANDAH’S TIMBER WORK

## WHERE ARE THEY?





# QUEEN ANNE

## RARE

The ‘Queen Anne’ style is a distinct subset of the Edwardian era. Queen Anne residences are typically larger buildings and are often built on prominent corner sites, with deep red brick being the building material of choice. Grand elements offset the bulk of the buildings; for example, large chimneys emerging from the hipped roofs. The tower elements also serve to break up the form. The roofs were often slate clad, but tended to change to terracotta tiles later in the period.

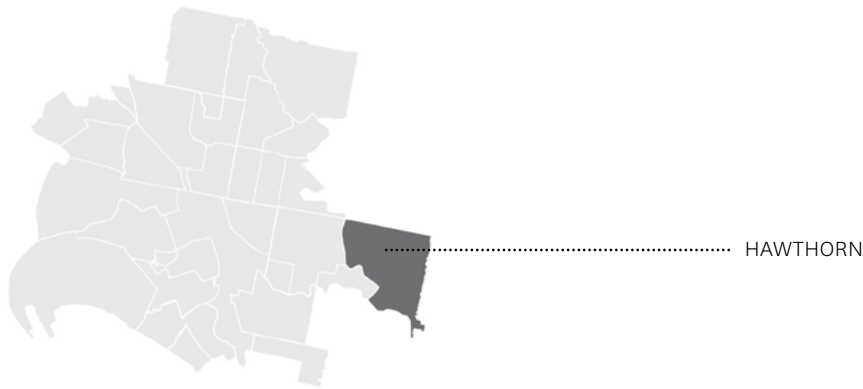
Inside, generous ceiling heights and Baltic pine floorboards define the character of the spaces. The front rooms and entry often have stained glass features at a high level.

Brick and iron palisade fences are typical original features externally, and some even retain the ordered original planting. Great examples can be found in the well-established, older suburbs.



TEXTURE, DETAIL, AND LOTS OF IT!

## WHERE ARE THEY?



# BUNGALOW

## CALIFORNIA DREAMING

The Californian Bungalow’s popularity in Melbourne followed the rise of American culture and style imported to the city. The airiness of the Bungalows suited the Australian climate just as well as they did California’s.

Postwar scarcity is evidenced by the lack of decoration of the bungalows compared to earlier building styles. Bungalows are constructed with timber and typically have large front verandahs topped with a tiled gable roof. Wide verandah piers in masonry visually anchor the lighter structures. One particular stylistic touch is the use of timber battening to the gable ends with roughcast render beyond, also seen in the Edwardian style.

Californian bungalows are typically four rooms, arranged two by two alongside a central corridor. Bay windows were a feature of many of the front rooms. The rears of most bungalows have been subject to renovations in the past, with varying success.

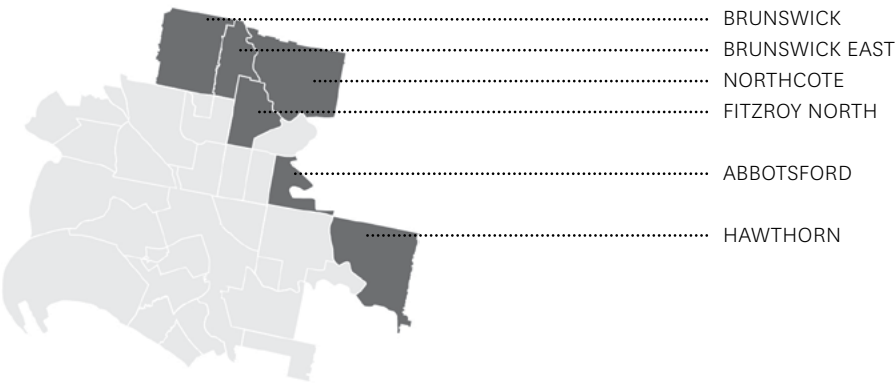
Good examples can be found in any number of Melbourne’s suburbs due to their popularity. Northcote in particular has some great examples.

They are much like the Edwardian in their renovation potential. The same guidelines of separating the old and the new apply, with a contemporary addition to the rear a fantastic bet.



NORTHCOTE BUNGALOW, SIMPLE AND WELL MANNERED

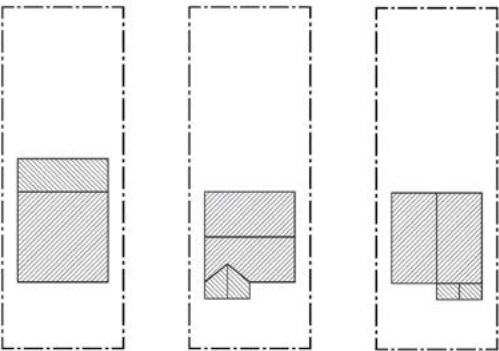
## WHERE ARE THEY?



## TYPICAL BLOCK SIZE AND POSITION

The later subdivisions in Northcote and the like were larger than the Victorian and Edwardian examples near the train lines and transport hubs. Typical block sizes range from 400-700sqm.

Most of the bungalows are well setback from both the sides and the front of the block.





# INTERWAR ART DECO

## SHIPS AND SAILS

Interwar Architecture in Melbourne is characterised by its eclectic mix of styles and Art Deco is probably one of the most recognisable. It’s bold, streamlined forms were born out of the rapid industrialisation happening globally - particularly in England, France, and the USA.

The public Art Deco buildings in Australia were perhaps less adorned than those built overseas; some notable examples include: the Former Russell Street Police Headquarters (built in the 1940’s and converted to apartments in 2005), the Manchester Unity building in the CBD and the Rivoli Theatres in Camberwell. The style was prominent in apartment buildings located in St Kilda and South Yarra (the Kia Ora building on St Kilda Road is a beautiful example).

As a detached residential style, Art Deco houses are found in Ivanhoe, Eaglemont, Balwyn, Hawthorn, and Sandringham.

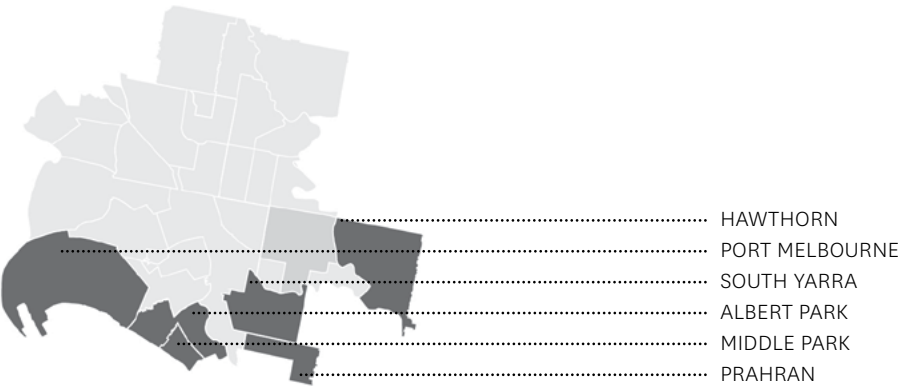
The houses are predominantly built in varying shades of cream brick, often with highlights or other compositional elements in white render. The houses started to enjoy steel windows with larger panes of glass (in some examples the glass is curved or faceted around a prominent corner). The detailing often occurs in the deco ‘rule of three’, with elements running vertically to reinforce the buildings scale. Many of the Art Deco properties are double brick in construction with a timber-framed roof.

The detached deco houses are topped with fairly ordinary tilled hipped roofs. Inside they are characterised by their polished timber floorboards, detailed cornice work and a fairly simple plan with small kitchens and bathrooms by today’s standards. Some examples still retain the colourful and detailed fixtures and fittings of the period.



SMOOTH LINES OF THE DECO ERA

## WHERE ARE THEY?





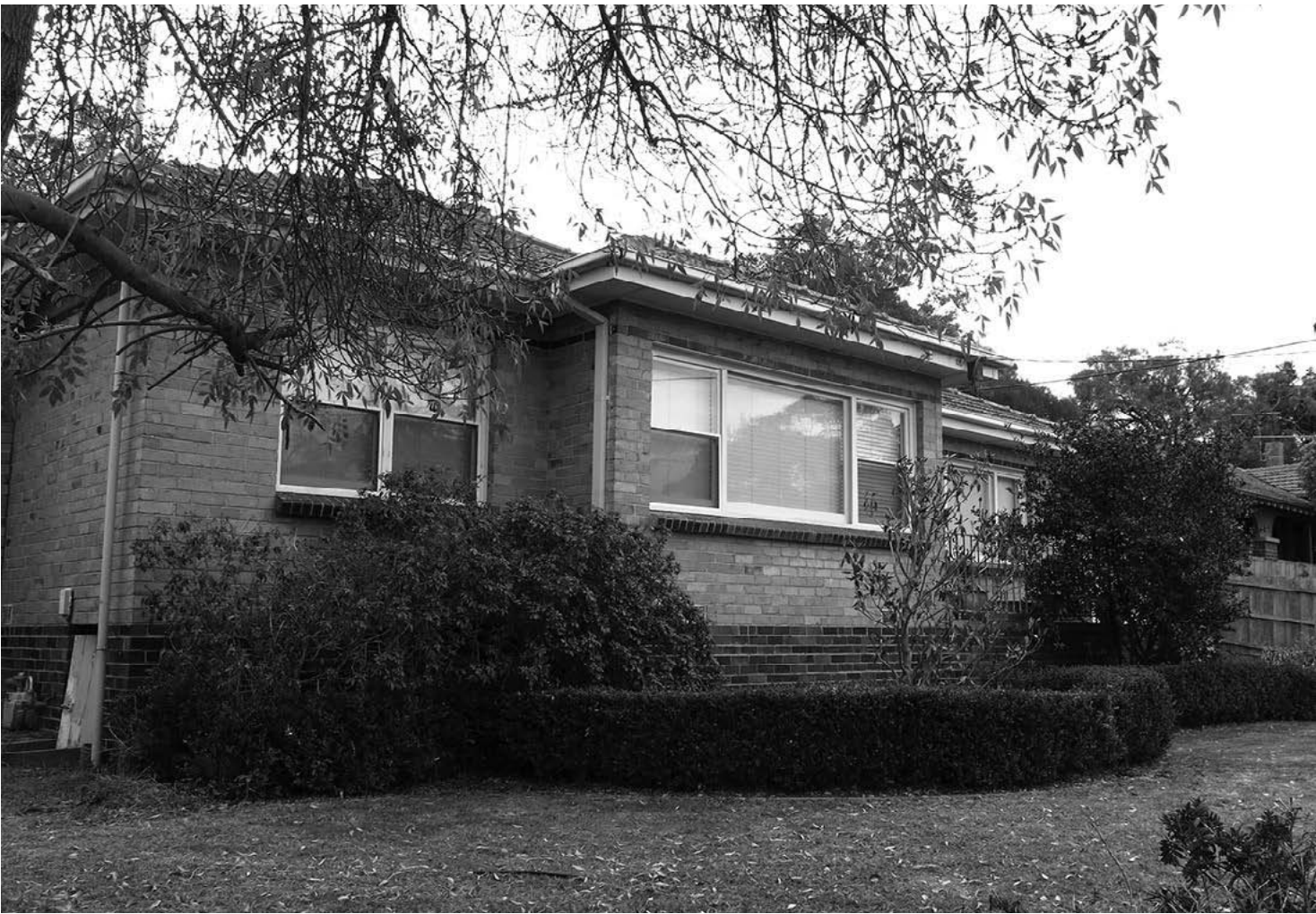
# POST WAR BRICK VENEER

## STURDY AND SPACIOUS

The post war suburbanisation of Melbourne was dominated by the newly established project builders, such as AV Jennings, who pioneered an assembly line method of building. Teams of specialised subcontractors would move from house to house in the greenfield estates. Production was much faster with this technique, bringing the cost of housing down to meet the pent up post-war demand. This phenomenon was mirroring what was happening on the West Coast of the USA at the time. Project building was, and still is, a large part of the Melbourne housing market. The other dominant driving force was the rise of the private car ownership: with no need to rely on public transport new suburbs rapidly filled the space left in between the lines of the train network. By the time 1960 rolled around the suburban fabric was complete.

The brick veneers were simply built, dominated by their large expanses of brick and tiled roofs. Windows first in timber and later steel began to dominate the facades. The houses were simple in plan and light on ornamentation; cornices and ceiling roses reflected the austerity of the times. They were often planned with the living area at the front of the house and the kitchen and bathroom in the centre.

The cream brick houses have a timber load-bearing frame with the single skin or ‘veneer’ of bricks to keep the weather out. The brick skin requires less maintenance when compared to a weatherboard house of the same vintage.

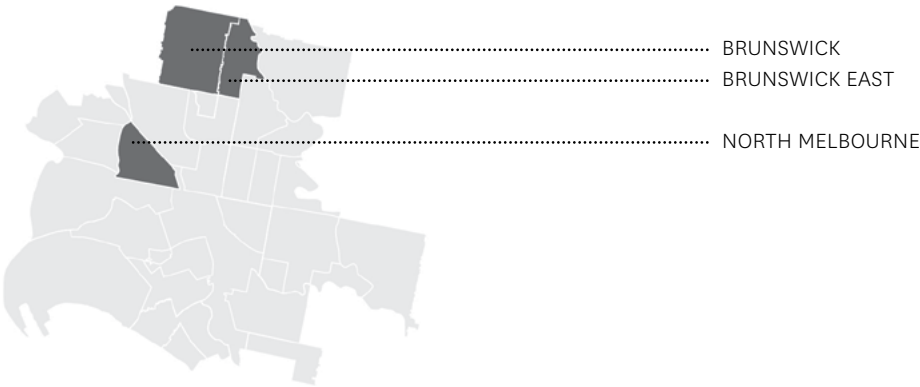


CREAM BRICK AND STEEL FRAMED WINDOWS ARE THE SIGNATURE OF BRICK VENEER STRUCTURES



HOUSING ON THE FRONT THIRD OF THE BLOCK ALLOWS FOR OPPORTUNITY IN THE BACKYARD

## WHERE ARE THEY?





# CASE STUDY TWO: BRICK VENEER

## SOLID BASE

Thornbury is one of the closest suburbs to the CBD with a significant stock of post war housing nestled amongst Californian bungalows. They are reasonably humble homes, most being around 90-120sqm in size with 2-3 bedrooms and a single kitchen and bathroom. Many have been the victim of 70's 'sunroom' extensions to the rear of the properties.

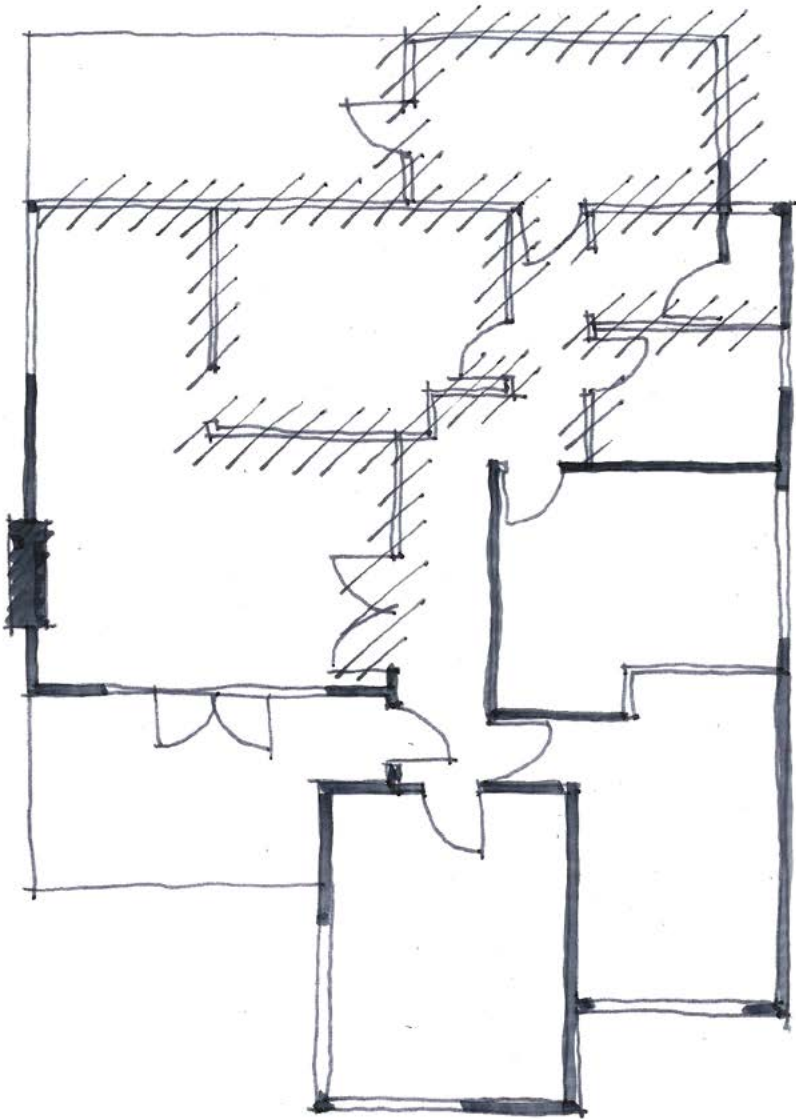
The beauty of these residences is that, apart from the odd appendage, they are usually in their original condition. Some retain late 40's cornicing and ceiling roses.

The original property we have chosen for this case study is a post war brick veneer in Thornbury. It is typical in it's square floor plan, and the deep floor plate makes it a challenge to bring the natural light into the middle of the building.

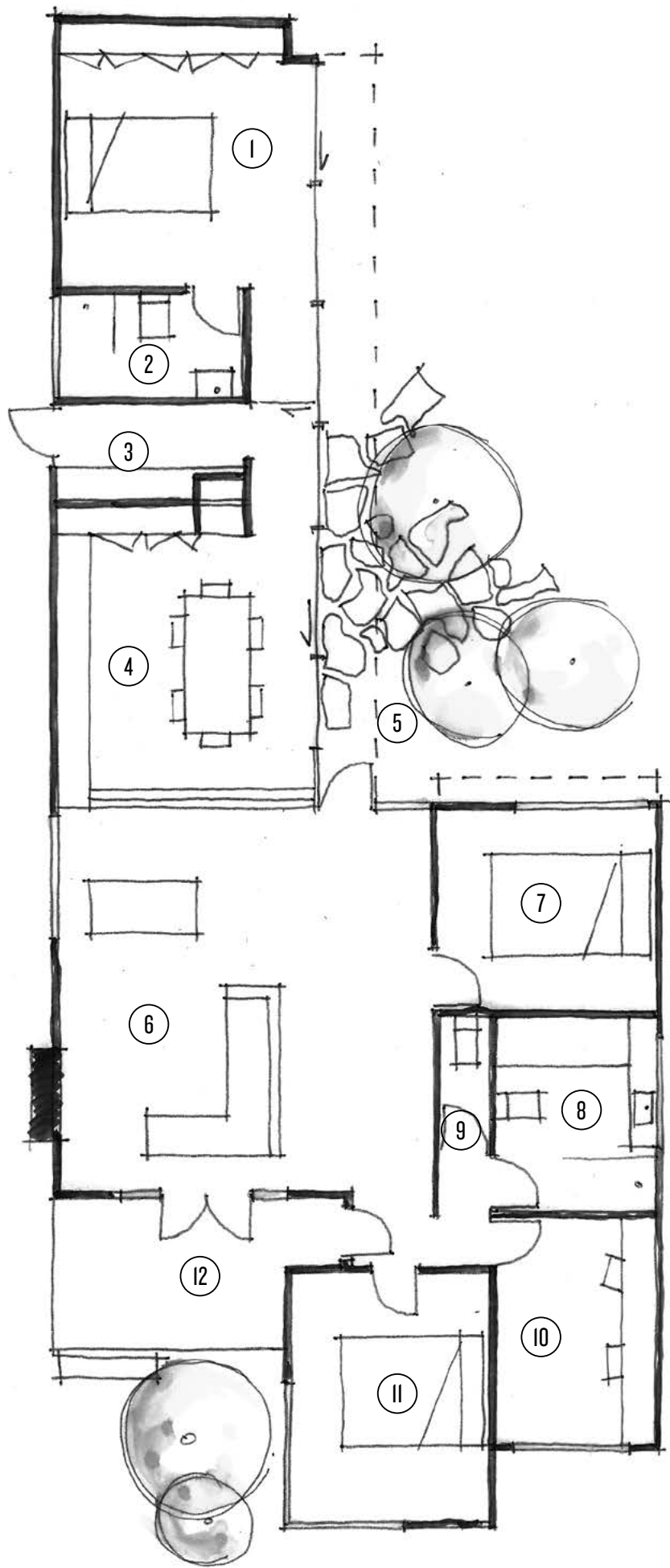
With this build the best bet would be to retain the existing front of the house with any addition off to the rear of the property. This 'clean break' makes it easier to build the addition instead of tying into the existing roofline to extend the form. As happens with the typical design response - opening up the rear of the house. The addition of a separate wing allows for better planning and access to natural light from the north.

As proposed, a new wing could be built running East-West to make use of the northern aspect. Floor to ceiling windows onto the north provide great aspect and access to the rear yard. Further down the addition, the laundry and master bedroom ensuite can be consolidated. At the western end of the addition, a large master-bedroom suite provides a sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of family life.

Two generous bedrooms can be accommodated in the existing structure along with a powder room and main bathroom. A small study on the east takes up the rest of the area.



EXISTING CONDITIONS



## LEGEND

- ① MASTER BEDROOM
- ② ENSUITE
- ③ LAUNDRY
- ④ KITCHEN / DINING
- ⑤ LANDSCAPING
- ⑥ LIVING
- ⑦ BEDROOM
- ⑧ BATHROOM
- ⑨ POWDER ROOM
- ⑩ STUDY
- ⑪ BEDROOM
- ⑫ ENTRY

PROPOSED RENOVATION



# WAREHOUSE

## INDUSTRY AT HOME

Beginning in the late 80's and early 90's many city fringe warehouse shells were converted into standalone housing. The fit outs were varied in character, the new wave moving back into the city who commissioned the projects were free thinking!

Each warehouse conversion has a different feel, and light access is sometimes a problem if they haven't been planned well. The best will have a substantial light court to brighten up the insides.

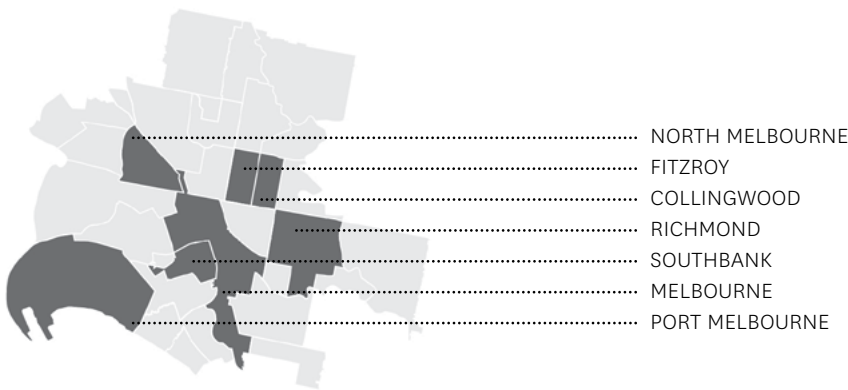
Many of the best warehouses have already been converted, however there is always the undiscovered gem.

The conversions were popular in Port Melbourne, Southbank, North Melbourne, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond. Taking advantage of Melbourne's well located industrial history.



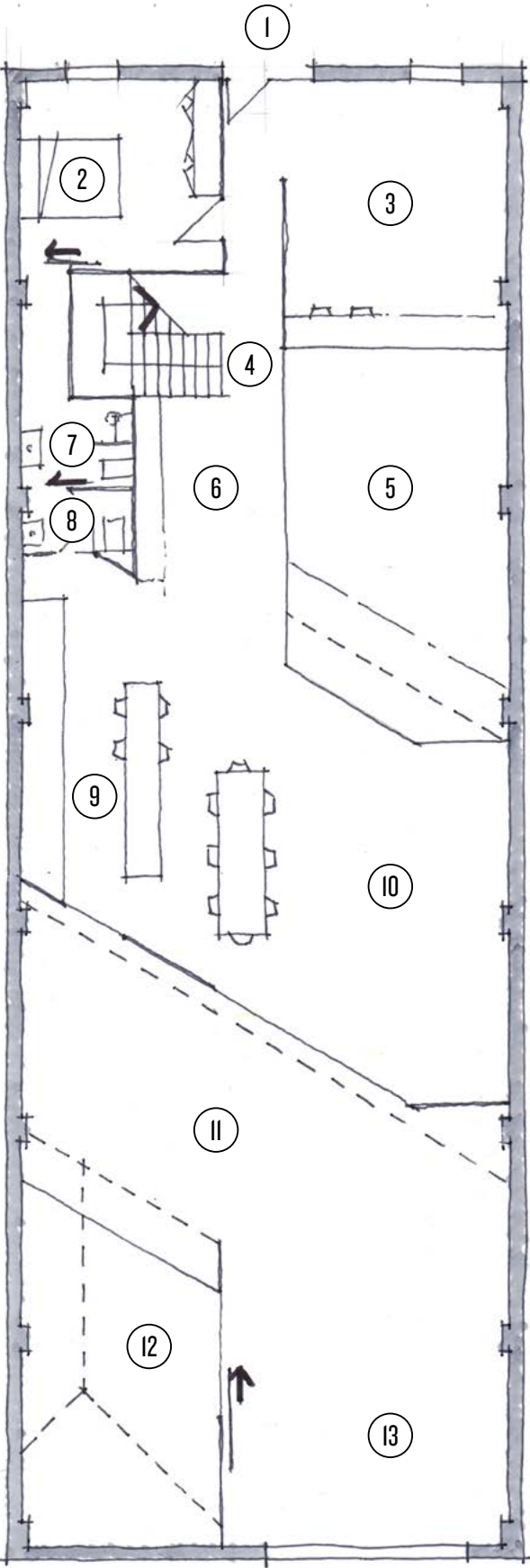
UNIQUE ACCOMMODATION

## WHERE ARE THEY?

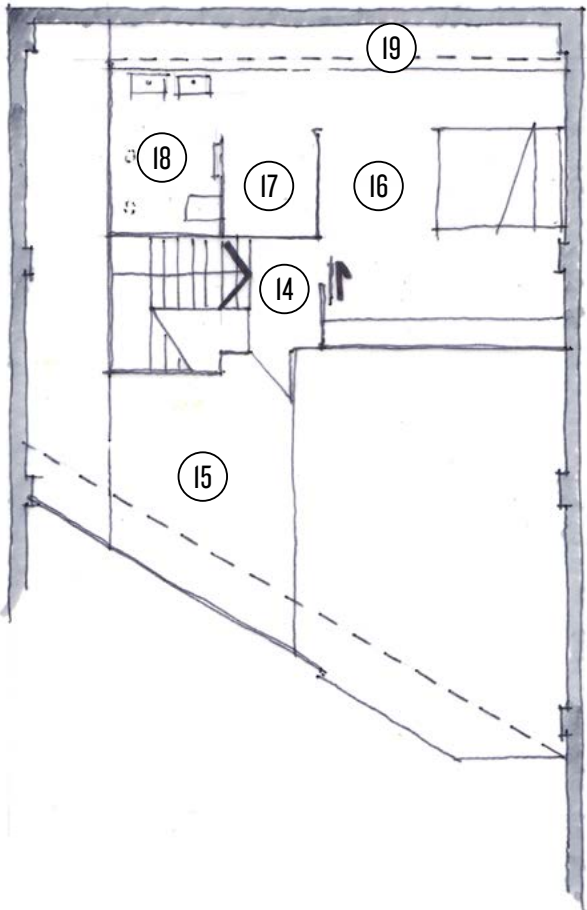


# CASE STUDY THREE: WAREHOUSE

GROUND FLOOR PLAN (NTS)



FIRST FLOOR PLAN (NTS)



## EXISTING STRUCTURE

Shown here is the concept design for a large warehouse shell located in Abbotsford. The 300sqm shell offers a perfect base for a three bedroom residence.

A large courtyard and rear yard at the ground level let lots of light into the North facing shell. In the rear courtyard a separate studio provides something akin to the suburban 'timber shed'.

On the upper level is a master bedroom with a walk in robe and ensuite, opening up onto a northern facing balcony.

## LEGEND

- 1 ENTRY
- 2 SECOND BEDROOM
- 3 STUDY / THIRD BEDROOM
- 4 STAIRS TO ABOVE
- 5 GARDEN / COURTYARD
- 6 LIBRARY
- 7 BATHROOM
- 8 POWDER ROOM
- 9 KITCHEN
- 10 LIVING ROOM
- 11 COURTYARD
- 12 STUDIO
- 13 CARPARKING

## UPSTAIRS

- 14 STAIRS FROM BELOW
- 15 ROOFTOP DECK
- 16 MASTER BEDROOM
- 17 WALK IN ROBE
- 18 ENSUITE
- 19 BALCONY WITH FULL HEIGHT DOORS TO BEDROOM



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